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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the scope of minicourse offerings in Kansas secondary social studies classes. The more course options provided students, the greater the humanistic potential of the school program. During the 1974-75 school year, the vast majority of Kansas high schools continued to offer traditional one- or two-semester long courses. United States history and government are the two most frequently offered social studies subjects. The only other social studies subject area offered in a majority of Kansas high schools is psychology. However, there is an unmistakable trend toward shorter, more varied course offerings as over 29 percent of Kansas high schools are now offering minicourses in the social studies. As in traditional length courses, United States history and government are the two most popular areas for minicourses. The American Civil War is the most popular subject for American history minicourses, while courses on recent American history, the West, and the colonial period are also being offered in a majority of schools. A specific minicourse in state and local government is the most consistently offered course in government. (Author/DE)

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# MORE HUMANISTIC SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMS THROUGH MINI-COURSES

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It is currently fashionable to discuss the great need for more humanistic secondary school programs. This discussion reflects the concern of educators that present "traditional" school programs are dehumanizing, or are certainly not as humanizing as they might be. A perusal of the literature reveals a plethora of factors that are considered essential to a humanistic program. These factors, as illustrated in the following chart, emphasize the organization, content and processes of the educational program.

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Insert Chart Here
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Although educators might disagree on all of the components essential to a "humanistic program," they would surely agree that such a program offers students a variety of content options. The differences between "traditional" and "humanistic" programs are readily apparent.

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Presented at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, Atlanta, Georgia, 1975.

A HUMANISTIC SCHOOL PROGRAM

Is Organized:

1. To provide an individualized learning program.
2. To provide as much flexibility as possible.
3. To provide a broad and comprehensive curriculum.
4. To encourage students to help plan and manage their own learning program.
5. To allow students to develop at their own rate.
6. To promote non-grading.
7. To provide a comprehensive analysis of each student's progress toward goals.
8. To utilize the talents and resources of the total school community.
9. To avoid a pre-determined curriculum sequence for students.
10. To utilize technology in the achievement of goals.

Utilizes Content and Processes:

1. That are "real" to students.
2. That consider emotions and the valuing process.
3. That encourage students to learn how to learn.
4. That lead to the development of a positive self-image-personal efficacy.
5. That emphasize student self-discipline.
6. That typify democracy in action.
7. That develop the students creativity and imagination.
8. That consider student needs and interests.
9. That encourage differences between individuals.
10. That treat students with dignity and self-respect.

It is the thesis of this paper that any program organized into traditional length courses mitigates against the development of viable learning alternatives for students. Although the author recognizes that content options are possible within existing courses, too frequently the student must enter and complete a full length course in order to satisfy only a few needs and interests related to the content of the course. It is surely relevant to ask, "What are the affectiye consequences of this form of cognitive structuring?"

Frequently, educational innovations with great "humanistic potential" may be so simple as to go relatively unnoticed by educators. Such may be the case with mini-courses, or those regularly scheduled courses that are less than a semester in length. The simple restructuring of the length of courses, with sound content decisions by teachers and students, provides a more comprehensive and flexible program than was ever thought possible before. The chart, presented earlier in this article, clearly indicates the relationship between comprehensiveness, flexibility, and "humanistic programs." The more course options provided students, the greater the humanistic potential of the school program.

The restructuring of traditional length courses into mini-courses can be aptly described as a "grass-roots" organizational innovation. The movement toward mini-courses seems to be fairly widespread without the particular impetus of any individual or group of individuals. It would appear that the movement, with the support of enlightened teachers and administration, is occuring everywhere at the same time.

The purpose of this paper is to report how Kansas high school social studies teachers have responded to the need for mini-courses, and the scope of the mini-courses that have been developed. Before discussing the mini-course offerings, however, it is deemed worthwhile to indicate the scope of the traditional length social studies courses in Kansas.

Table 1 indicates the scope of traditional length courses (1 semester or longer) offered by Kansas high schools during the 1974-75 school year. The data were tabulated from information provided by the Kansas State Department of Education.

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Insert Table 1 Here

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As indicated, United States History and Government are the two most frequently offered social studies subjects in Kansas. The only other social studies subject area offered in a majority of Kansas high schools is psychology. It is interesting to note the infrequency with which certain subjects are offered e.g., anthropology, U.S. geography, problems in U.S. democracy, etc.

When traditional course length requirements are removed and a staff decides what mini-courses to offer, it is possible to examine the scope of each subject area. Before this will be discussed, however, it is of value to note the number and percent of Kansas high schools with mini-course programs in one or more social studies subject areas. Again, mini-courses are regularly scheduled courses less than a semester in length.

TABLE 1

One Semester and Full Year
Social Studies Course Offerings

| Subject | # of Teachers | # of High Schools | %* of High Schools | Subject | # of Teachers | # of High Schools | % of High Schools |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U. S. History | 451 | 260 | 68.9 | Intro/Geog. | 9 | 9 | 2.3 |
| U. S. Government | 337 | 260 | 68.9 | Eur. Hist. | 9 | 9 | 2.3 |
| Intro/Psychology | 269 | 241 | 63.9 | Western Civ. | 9 | 9 | 2.3 |
| Non U. S. History | 200 | 185 | 49.0 | Western/Non West. Area Studies | 8 | 8 | 2.1 |
| Intro/Sociology | 166 | 153 | 40.5 | Anthropology | 7 | 7 | 1.8 |
| Current Affairs | 86 | 68 | 18.0 | Ind. Stud/Govt. | 7 | 7 | 1.8 |
| World Geography | 59 | 55 | 14.5 | Family Living | 7 | 5 | 1.3 |
| Prin/Economics | 54 | 50 | 13.2 | Prob. U. S. Dem. | 6 | 5 | 1.3 |
| Inter. Relations | 41 | 37 | 9.8 | U. S. Geog. | 4 | 4 | 1.0 |
| Ethnic Studies | 26 | 15 | 3.9 | African Hist. | 4 | 3 | 0.7 |
| Citizenship | 24 | 22 | 5.8 | Ind. Study/ World Hist. | 4 | 3 | 0.7 |
| Amer. Studies | 23 | 13 | 3.4 | Law Education | 3 | 3 | 0.7 |
| Econ/Consumer | 22 | 19 | 5.0 | Intro/Philosophy | 3 | 3 | 0.7 |
| Intro/Pol. Sci. | 14 | 11 | 2.9 | Economic Geog. | 2 | 2 | 0.5 |
| Comp. Econ. | 13 | 13 | 3.4 | Latin Amer. Hist. | 2 | 2 | 0.5 |
| Kansas History | 13 | 13 | 3.4 | Kansas Geog. | 1 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Civics | 13 | 10 | 2.6 | Asian Hist. | 1 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Humanities | 13 | 8 | 2.1 | | | | |
| Econ. Hist/U. S. | 11 | 10 | 2.6 | | | | |
| Ind. Study/U. S. History | 11 | 8 | 2.1 | | | | |
| Intro/Soc. Studies | 9 | 9 | 2.3 | | | | |

*Percent of 377 Kansas Public High Schools

TABLE 2

Social Studies Mini-Courses
By Subject Area

| Subject | # of High Schools | % of High Schools* With Mini-Courses | % of all Kansas** High Schools |
|---|---|---|---|
| American History | 74 | 65.5 | 19.6 |
| Government | 74 | 65.5 | 19.6 |
| Sociology | 33 | 29.2 | 8.8 |
| World History | 28 | 24.7 | 7.4 |
| Psychology | 28 | 24.7 | 7.4 |
| Economics | 19 | 16.8 | 5.0 |
| Geography | 8 | 7.1 | 2.1 |

*Percent of 113 Kansas public high schools with social studies mini-courses in one or more subject areas.

**Percent of 377 public high schools in Kansas.

The Kansas State Department of Education utilizes a separate coding system for mini-courses. The data from Table 2 can be added to the data in Table 1 for an indication of the total scope of social studies offerings.

Over 29 percent of Kansas high schools are now offering mini-courses in the social studies. The trend toward shorter, more varied course experiences is unmistakable. Although the motive may not always be a humanistic one students are given more options and the opportunity to help design their own learning programs.

To identify the most frequently offered mini-courses in American history and government, forty class descriptions and/or class schedules were collected from schools with mini-course programs in the two subject areas.

Table 3 discloses the scope of American history mini-course offerings in the forty high schools.

TABLE 3

American History Mini-Courses

| Subject | f* | % | Subject | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Civil War | 29 | 72.5 | Ind. Study | 9 | 22.5 |
| Recent U. S. | 26 | 65.0 | Kansas Hist. | 8 | 20.0 |
| Amer. West. | 25 | 62.5 | W. W. I | 8 | 20.0 |
| Colonies | 23 | 57.5 | W. W. II | 8 | 20.0 |
| Revolution | 17 | 42.5 | Black Hist. | 8 | 20.0 |
| W. W. I & II | 14 | 35.0 | Great Men | 7 | 17.5 |
| Amer. Indian | 13 | 32.5 | Diplomatic Hist. | 7 | 17.5 |
| 20's & 30's | 13 | 32.5 | Depression | 6 | 15.0 |
| Ind./Urban | 10 | 25.0 | Review | 6 | 15.0 |
| Minorities | 9 | 22.5 | Discovery/ Exploration | 5 | 12.5 |

*Frequency and percent of 40 selected schools with American History mini-course programs.

As indicated, the American Civil War is the most popular subject for American history mini-courses. Courses focusing on recent American history, the West, and the colonial period were also being offered in a majority of the schools studied. The majority of schools do offer a course on the world wars, but not in combination. It is interesting to note that only a small majority of schools offer a course related

to the discovery and exploration of the United States.

In comparison with Table 1, it is evident that as schools develop mini-course programs they are more likely to institute independent study courses for their students.

Additional Courses

The number in the parenthesis indicates the number of schools offering a course related to the subject area.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Immigrants | (5) | Women in History | (3) |
| W. W. I through W. W. II | (4) | Jacksonian Dem. | (2) |
| Social Reform | (4) | Chicano History | (2) |
| Am. Econ. History | (4) | U. S. Agriculture | (2) |
| Military History | (4) | Slavery | (2) |
| U. S. 1901-14 | (3) | Labor History | (2) |

Table 4 indicates the scope of government mini-courses developed in forty selected high schools.

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Insert Table 4 Here

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Although it is assumed that the content of any mini-course will not be mutually exclusive of all other offerings, the information included in Table 4 indicates the general subject matter of the most frequently offered mini-courses. A specific course in state and local government, offered by 28 of the 40 schools, is the most consistent mini-course offering

TABLE 4

Government Mini-Courses

| Subject | f* | % | Subject | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| State/Local | 28 | 70.0 | Intro/Govt. | 9 | 22.5 |
| Presidency | 19 | 47.5 | Civil Rights | 8 | 20.0 |
| Constitution | 17 | 42.5 | Supreme Court | 5 | 12.5 |
| Youth Law | 16 | 40.0 | Govt. Finances | 5 | 12.5 |
| Comparative Govts. | 15 | 37.5 | Ism's | 5 | 12.5 |
| Legislature | 14 | 35.0 | Voting/Elections | 4 | 10.0 |
| Cont. Pol. Issues | 14 | 35.0 | Branches/Govt. | 4 | 10.0 |
| Judiciary | 12 | 30.0 | Ind. Study | 4 | 10.0 |
| Pol. Parties | 12 | 30.0 | Criminology | 3 | 7.5 |
| Inter Relations | 11 | 27.5 | City Govt. | 2 | 5.0 |

*Frequency and percent of 40 selected schools with mini-course programs in government.

in government.

In general, the courses, reflect a fairly traditional approach to the subject matter of government. Students are usually given far lower course options in government than are available in American history.

It was mentioned at the beginning of this paper that mini-courses make a more humanistic social studies program possible. With few prerequisites and more electives, and with the professional guidance of teachers, students are more likely to meet their needs and interests with mini-courses than with traditional length courses. This assumes,

of course, that the mini-courses reflect the breadth and depth of the subject matter.

It has been the purpose of this paper to determine how Kansas social studies teachers have responded to the need for mini-courses, and to disclose the mini-courses that have been developed in the two most frequently offered subject areas.